

GAMEFACE

INDIANAPOLIS OK MAGAZINE

"JUAN GONE!"
JUAN
GONZALEZ



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

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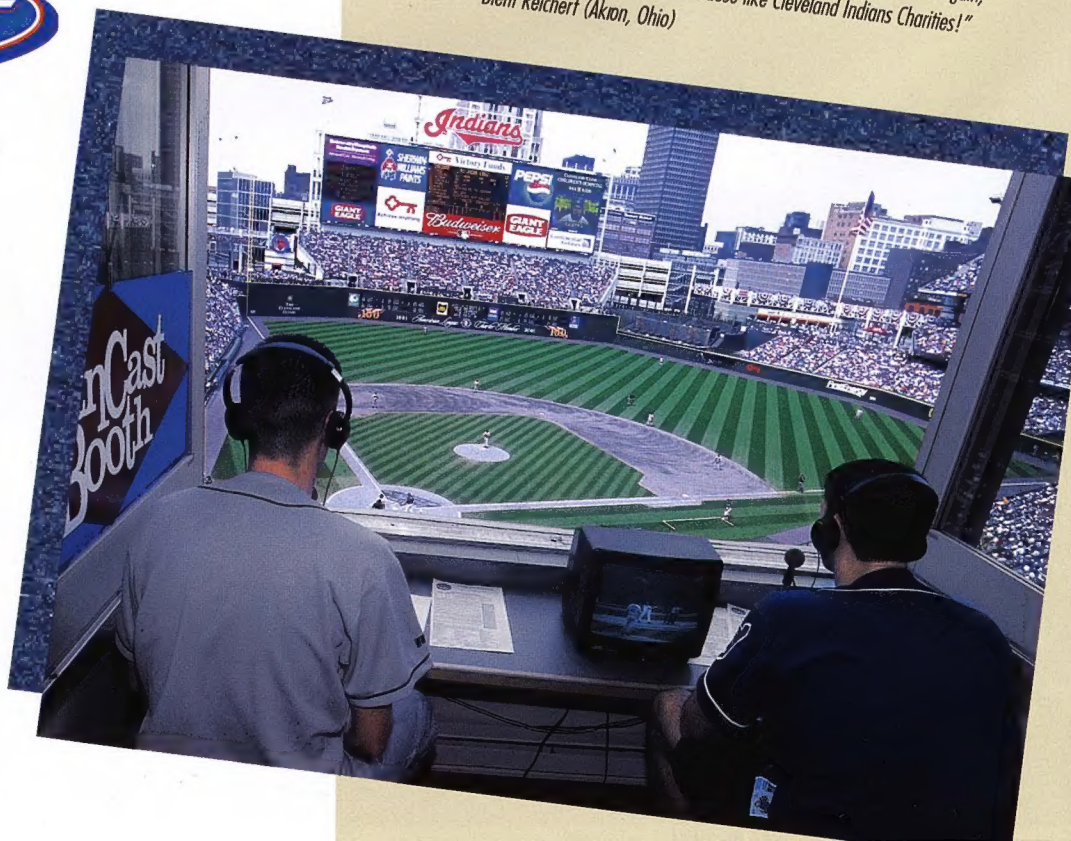
• John Ceculski (Reynoldsburg, Ohio)

"I always wondered what it would be like to sit in the broadcast booth and call the play-by-play. Having the chance to try it out was definitely an unforgettable experience. You get to see the game from a completely different view. It's a MUST DO for any Indians fan!"

• Rob Tittel (Stow, Ohio)

"The FanCast Booth was a great experience that made me really feel like I was a part of the game! It was something that I never thought I would get the opportunity to do. It's a great memory that will last a long time. I would definitely do it again, especially when it benefits a good cause like Cleveland Indians Charities!"

• Brent Reichert (Akron, Ohio)



Way Back! Gone!!!

PERFECT MATCH PERFECT WATCH

BY STEVE HERRICK

***Sometimes there's
a perfect fit between a player
and an organization. Take
the Indians and Russell
Branyan, for instance...***

As a kid growing up, Branyan began playing baseball and discovered he could hit the ball a long way. That ability continued into his high school career when professional teams started to notice.

It's no surprise the Cleveland Indians, an organization that's been producing power-hitters for the last decade, was one of them. The Tribe took Branyan with its seventh pick in the 1994 Amateur Draft.

Power-hitter meets an organization that loves power-hitters. Sounds like a perfect situation for both.

"There's no doubt that Russell has great power," said Indians manager Charlie Manuel. "He can hit the ball a long way. When Russell comes up to the plate, people stop and watch."

Branyan knows what his manager is talking about. He also enjoys watching the long ball.

"I'm just like any other fan," he said. "I like watching the home run. I definitely like seeing the home run."

Even from the days he began playing T-Ball, Branyan liked hitting the ball a long



Photo: Gregory Drezdson



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

way. Born in Warner Robins, Georgia on December 19, 1975, he grew up admiring the likes of Jack Clark, Matt Williams, Willie Stargell, and Leon Durham, who were all top power-hitters. His favorite player was Dale Murphy of the Atlanta Braves, one of the top power-hitters during the 1980s.

"As a kid growing up in Georgia, you were always watching Dale Murphy," said Branyan. "He was a big sports figure there."

Branyan took his admiration for power-hitters into his own game.

"I couldn't relate to the guys who hit the ball on the ground and ran around the

bases," he said. "That's not my gig. I related more to the guys who hit the ball with authority. I always tried to hit the ball hard and hit it a long way."

Branyan credits his older brother, Matt, for helping him learn the game. "My brother and I grew up together," he said. He always pushed me to the limit."

Branyan has all the looks of a power-hitter. At 6-foot-3 and 195 pounds, he is an imposing figure as he takes a big swing from the left-handed side of the batter's box.

Manuel, the Tribe's former hitting coach, is a huge fan of power-hitters. He topped the

37-homer mark four times while playing in Japan. In this case, Manuel has a special interest in Branyan.

"Russell has raw power," he said. "He's a big guy with a big swing and the ball jumps off his bat. He hits them a long way and he hits them real high. When he hits one, it takes a long time for it to come down."

One of Branyan's longest home runs came this season in Spring Training. During a game against the Houston Astros in Venezuela, Branyan belted a home run that almost left the stadium and traveled an estimated 550 feet. The blast left a lot of people who saw it shaking their heads in admiration. For most observers, it was the longest home run they have ever seen.

"That was a bomb," said Indians first baseman Jim Thome, who has been known to hit a bomb or two himself. "He really hit that one."

Some of Branyan's teammates think the homer might have reached the third deck in right field at Jacobs Field, a place no player has reached since the ballpark opened in 1994.

***"Russell has raw power.
He's a big guy
with a big swing and
the ball jumps off his bat."***

**Indians Manager
Charlie Manuel
on Russell Branyan**

"Sometimes you hit balls that go a long way," said Branyan. "Sometimes you surprise yourself. It's fun to hit a ball good. It brings a lot of satisfaction."

It didn't take long for Branyan to realize the Indians were an organization that liked to churn out power-hitters.

"I was happy to fit the mold," he said. "I didn't know a whole lot about the organization when I signed, but I knew they had a lot of good power-hitters like Albert Belle, Jim Thome, Manny Ramirez, and Paul Sorrento."

It didn't take long for the Indians to start thinking that Branyan would someday join that long list of sluggers. He hit 19 home runs at Class A Columbus (GA) in his first

full season with the organization in 1995. Branyan topped that by hitting 40 homers to lead the South Atlantic League the following season, also at Columbus. He almost matched that the following season by hitting a combined 39 homers after splitting the season between Class A Kinston (27) and Class AA Akron (12).

"It takes a lot of discipline to stay here. It's more than talent. It's about decision-making...A lot of good players fall through the cracks...You always have to convince people of your ability."

Indians Power-Hitter Russell Branyan on what it takes to remain in the Majors after being called up from the Minor Leagues

That power production made Branyan one of the top prospects in baseball.

A wrist injury limited him to 43 games in 1998 at Akron, but he still hit 16 home runs in only 163 at-bats. He was called up to the Indians on September 26 and went 0-for-4 in his debut against Minnesota.

Branyan started the 1999 season at Class AAA Buffalo. He was called up to the Indians on July 23. That night at Yankee Stadium he hit his first Major League home run, a two-run shot off David Cone.

Hitting your first home run in baseball's most famous stadium off one of the game's best pitchers at the time is indeed a special moment.

"It was exciting," said Branyan. "It was my first at-bat at Yankee Stadium. It was a good feeling. I just hoped it wasn't my only one."

Branyan was sent back to Buffalo that season and hit 30 home runs for the Bisons. He started last season at Buffalo and was called up on May 30. Branyan hit 13 homers in 41 games before being sent back to Buffalo. He led American League rookies in homers at the time he was sent down. Branyan was called up again on August 31 and finished the season with 16 homers for the Indians and 21 at Buffalo.

Branyan's path to the big leagues was blocked by talented players at third base, the outfield, and designated hitter. He was the subject of trade rumors, but the Indians said "No" to all teams who were interested.

"I had some good years in the Minors," he said. "I continued to work hard, but it was a difficult situation. All I could do was get my time in until I got the opportunity."

Branyan doesn't want to be a player who makes a splash in the big leagues and then disappears.

"You see guys in the big leagues and they're here for two or three years and you never hear from them again," he said. "It takes a lot of discipline to stay here. It's more than talent. It's about decision-making and making the *right* decisions. A lot of good players fall through the cracks. This game is tough. You always have to convince people of your ability."

Branyan is beginning to learn the secret to staying in the big leagues and having a long career. Making it to the big leagues is one thing. Staying in the big leagues is a completely different story.

"You've got to work harder to stay here," he said. "Pitchers are constantly making adjustments. You have to make adjustments and stay on top of your game."



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

But at the same time, he's a very dangerous hitter. He's a big force in a lineup."

With the power, Branyan also has racked up high strikeout numbers throughout his career.

"I would like to get my strikeouts down to under 100, but I don't know if that will happen," he said. "Putting the ball in play is a good thing. Putting it in play with authority is even better."

***"I'm just going to leave
Russell alone and let
him hit."***

**Indians Manager
Charlie Manuel**

"We know we're going to have to live with some strikeouts, but you always do with power-hitters," said Hart. "What we're looking for is more contact because that translates into more run production. You look at the great hitters and they not only hit homers, they drive in runs, put the ball in play, and score runs."

Hart thinks the future is bright for Branyan. "The one thing that everybody knows is that Russell is an extremely gifted power-hitter," he said. "The question that needs to be answered is if Russell is going to be a good hitter who can put it all together with his power. He's starting to show that now."

Many Tribe fans compare Branyan to Thome, another big left-handed hitter with great power, at similar points in their career. Thome has another comparison.

"Russell is similar to Richie Sexson when he came up," said Thome. "He has unlimited potential. He's getting smarter at the plate. You can see that as he gets more experience. He's only going to get better."

Manuel wants to take a simple approach with Branyan.

"I'm not going to try to stop him," Manuel said. "I'm just going to leave Russell alone and let him hit."

Branyan wants to take full advantage of every chance he gets. "This game is all about opportunity," he said. "Once you get the opportunity, you have to perform when you get a chance."

Branyan has shown every sign that he's ready to take advantage of this chance. If he does, that perfect situation between player and team will continue for a long time.



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

MULTITUDE OF YOUTH PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY THE FUND-RAISING EFFORTS OF CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

Cleveland Indians Charities (CIC), the charitable arm of the Cleveland Indians, was established in 1989 to make a positive contribution to the quality of life for Northeast Ohio youth by providing educational and recreational opportunities.

It is the intent of CIC that the contributions made to these organizations will energize thousands of kids to face today's challenges with courage and responsibility.

Since 1989, CIC has donated nearly \$3.5 million to local organizations that serve the youth of Northeast Ohio. CIC has established relationships with several local organizations that focus on youth education and youth recreation. The following organizations benefit from a continued partnership with CIC:

- Cleveland Municipal School District
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland
- United Black Fund Larry Doby Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) Program
- City of Cleveland Division of Recreation Rookie League Program
- Cleveland Baseball Federation
- North American Indian Cultural Center
- Cleveland State University
- Winter Haven, Florida Boys & Girls Club

The relationships that CIC maintains with these Northeast Ohio youth-service agencies provide the opportunity to jointly create, design, and execute programs and activities. The result is programming which helps young people develop necessary life skills, learn responsibility and cooperation, and develop courage and confidence to face today's hurdles.

The monies donated by CIC have been raised through a variety of activities and special events (see pages 28, 30) throughout the season. In addition, a major portion of the total was raised through the generosity of Cleveland Indians corporate partners.

In 2000, for the sixth straight year, CIC donated \$100,000 to the Cleveland Municipal School District's Athletic Department. The \$100,000 donation will help defray the cost of its high school baseball and softball programs. CIC also made significant donations to the following organizations in 2000: Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland (\$100,000); United Black Fund (\$60,000) for the operation of the Larry Doby RBI Program; City of Cleveland Division of Recreation (\$45,000) for the operation of the Rookie League Youth Baseball Program and a girls softball program; and Cleveland Baseball Federation (\$25,000).

The Cleveland Indians organization and its players have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact on the youth of Northeast Ohio. It is an opportunity and responsibility we embrace.

If you would like information on any of the programs offered through Cleveland Indians Charities, please call 216.420.4400.

continued on page 28, see Fund-Raising Efforts . . .

First baseman Jim Thome (far left), pitcher Dave Burba (fourth from right, back row), and manager Charlie Manuel (second from right, back row) participated in the festivities when CIC presented the Cleveland Municipal Schools with \$100,000 to support their baseball and softball programs.



Gregory Drezdon

CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

FUND-RAISING EFFORTS SUPPORT YOUTH PROGRAMS

2001 CIC EVENTS

continued from page 26

★ **Online Auction** – You can own a piece of Indians history! Visit www.indians.com now through December to bid on a variety of Indians memorabilia, including autographed baseballs, jerseys, bats, and other unique items. Items change every Monday at 3PM EST.



FanCast Booth – Get a different view of the game from a Jacobs Field broadcast booth – as you call all the action on the field. You'll take home a souvenir video recording of your unique experience. Cost for one fan to broadcast an inning is \$30, or bring a friend and broadcast as a pair for \$40. Call 216.420.4382 to book your game and innings in advance, or sign up at Guest Services in section 120.

★ **Jacobs Field Tours** – Experience the excitement of Cleveland's crown jewel with a behind-the-scenes tour of one of baseball's greatest ballparks. Tours are available May through September, Monday through Saturday, plus Sundays in June, July, and August when the

team is on the road. Tickets are \$6.50 for adults and \$4.50 for youths 14 and under and senior citizens. A group rate and time are also available. Tickets are available at the Jacobs Field Box Office, all nine Indians Team Shops, through www.indians.com, and at all Ticketmaster Ticket Centers. The tour includes a visit to: the Bullpen, Club Lounge, Press Box, Dugout, Party Suite, and Batting Cages (subject to change). Call 216.420.4385 for more information.

★ **Major League Baseball Players' Alumni Association Swing with the Legends Golf Outing** – Corporate registration includes a Jacobs "Field of Dreams" clinic (Sunday, June 17), sponsors brunch and golf outing (Monday, June 18), and the Swing with the Legends Golf Outing at Tanglewood Country Club (Tuesday, June 19). Call 216.377.2010 for further details.

continued on page 30, see Fund-Raising Efforts . . .

A number of "musical" Tribe stars (like Omar Vizquel) have performed annually at Tribe Jam – delighting audiences filled with baseball and music fans (see page 30).

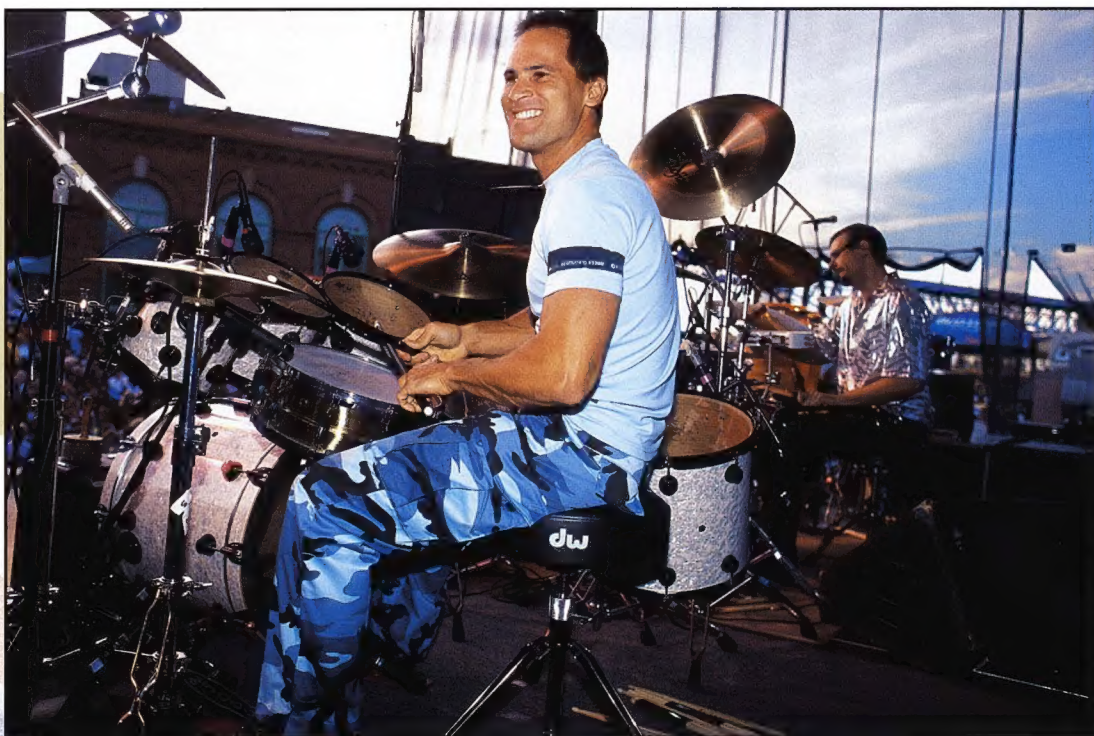


Photo: Gregory Drezdson



GREAT CATCH!

Ruggles

The Premium Taste
You Deserve...



CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

FUND-RAISING EFFORTS SUPPORT YOUTH PROGRAMS

continued from page 28



Corporate Hitting Challenge – Swing for the fences in the 6th annual corporate event. This single-elimination tournament pits Cleveland businesses against each other. The first round begins in May and winds up in September. All rounds take place at Jacobs Field, with warm-ups in the batting cages. Teams receive a souvenir video of their action and a commemorative gift. Call 216.420.4389 to register your team of nine players.

Picnic in the Park with the Stars, A 100th Anniversary

Gala Celebration – Saturday, July 21: You've never seen Jacobs Field quite like this before. Imagine dancing to a live swing band right on the infield, cocktails from the dugout, and mingling up close with stars.

The fourth annual event will feature the entire Indians roster and coaches. In addition, we've invited *The 100*

Greatest Indians. It's baseball's past, present, and future all in one place – and only at CIC's Picnic in the Park with the Stars. Call 216.420.4400 to order tickets.

★ **Tribe Jam** – Saturday, July 7, on the Nautica Stage, see several Tribesmen as they perform with well-known, rock-n-roll stars for the celebrity rock concert event of the summer. The third annual event is sure to be fun for music and baseball fans of all ages. Call 216.420.4400 for the complete lineup of stars and ticket prices.



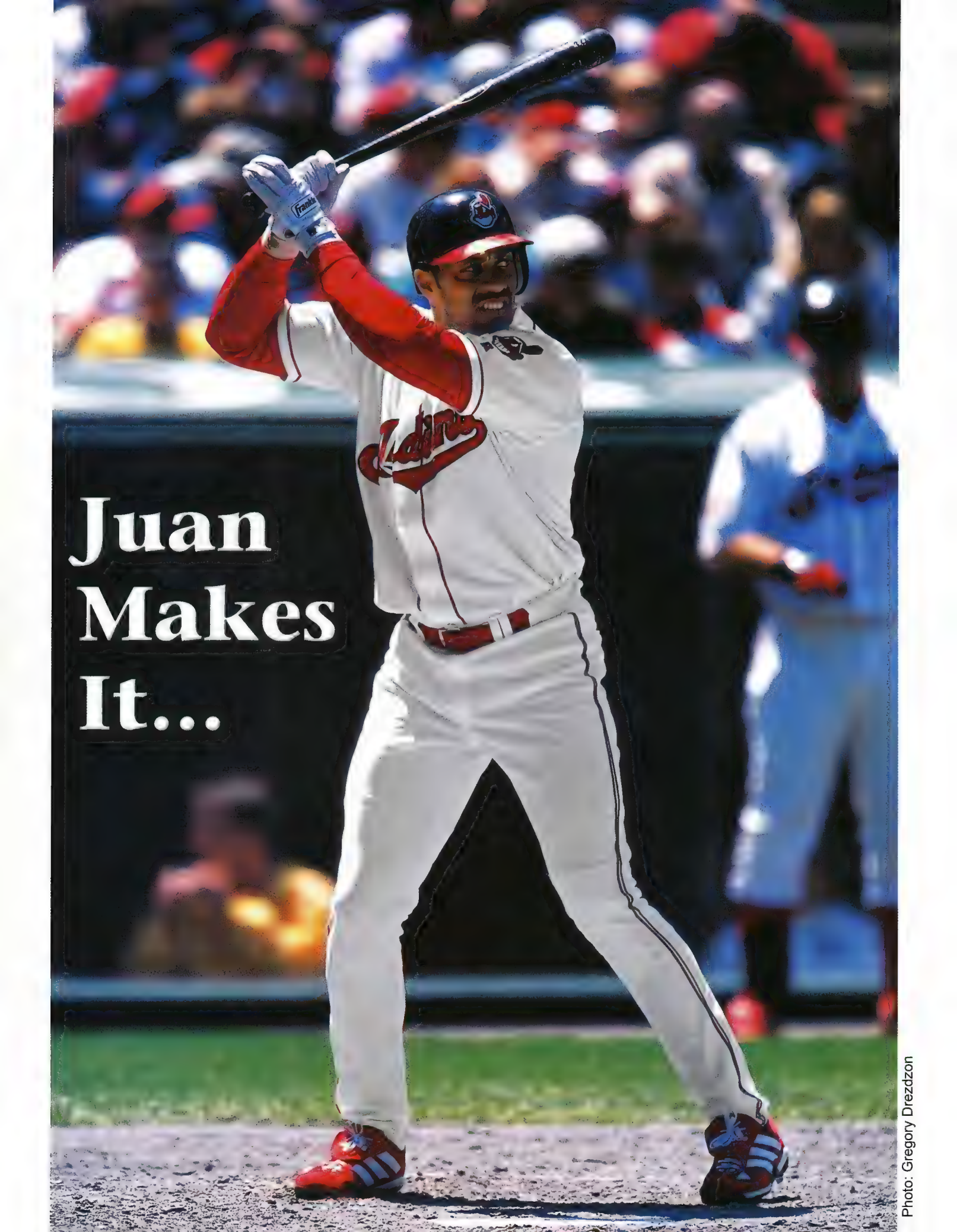
Celebrity Golf Classic – Monday, September 17, the 10th annual Golf Classic will be held at Quail Hollow Resort and Country Club. Teams will be paired with Indians players, coaches, and local celebrities. Call 216.420.4400 to register.

Gold Glove third baseman Travis Fryman signs autographs at the 2000 Picnic.

The Picnic in the Park with the Stars has been a successful fund raiser since its inception three years ago. Participants enjoy mingling with the entire Indians team – at Jacobs Field. Music, dancing, and delightful refreshments round out the event.



Gregory Drezdon

A full-page photograph of a baseball player in a white and red St. Louis Cardinals uniform, captured in the middle of a powerful swing. He is wearing a black batting helmet with the Cardinals logo, white batting gloves, and red and white cleats. The background is a blurred stadium filled with spectators. The text "Juan Makes It..." is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Juan
Makes
It...**



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Juan Gonzalez just wants to play baseball. No glitter, no glamour, no ghosts of rightfielders past – just baseball. Pretty good decision on his part, too. There aren't many who can play like he can.

Gonzalez's first month in an Indians uniform did wonders in keeping the

always-demanding Tribe fans from mentioning *The Man(ny) Who Got Away*. You hardly hear Cleveland fans bemoaning the departure of, uh, what's his name, these days.

After Gonzalez hit better than .380 with the best slugging percentage in the American League in the season's first month, it

became clear the Indians had acquired a two-time AL MVP rather than an unhappy ex-Detroit Tiger.

"Juan's healthy. Juan's happy. And Juan just wants to play," says fellow Puerto Rican and longtime friend Roberto Alomar. "One thing I like about Juan is that he cares about

the other players. He always asks me, 'Do you think the other guys like me? Because this team is good for me.'

"I tell him, 'Juan, everybody likes you. All you have to do is play hard.' Jacobs Field is a beautiful place to play baseball and I can tell, he's excited."

"Jacobs Field is a great ballpark, especially for a power-hitter," Gonzalez says. "The ball jumps off my bat – and Jacobs Field has normal dimensions. The park in Detroit was not for power-hitters. I would hit the ball hard, but it wouldn't go anywhere."

"Cleveland is a great town [in which] to play baseball. Great fans, great city. I'm happy to be here. This team has great chemistry. And I knew a lot of guys before I got here – Robbie, Wil Cordero, Jim Thome."

No matter how excited Gonzalez may be to be playing at Jacobs Field, a ballpark where he hit more homers against the Indians than any other opposing player, it's doubtful he's any more excited than the Indians are to have him in Cleveland.

During the 1990s, only Albert Belle had more RBI than Gonzalez. Only Belle, Ken Griffey, Jr., and Mark McGwire hit more homers, and only Frank Thomas equaled

Gonzalez's two American League MVP awards.

"Juan has Hall-of-Fame credentials," said Tribe GM John Hart at the signing.

Nicknamed "Igor" after a professional wrestler, Juan Alberto Gonzalez was born October 16, 1969 in Vega Baja. He began his professional career in the Rangers organiza-

"He gets a real good jump on the ball and he's got a good arm and, not only that, he runs the bases very well."

Indians Manager Charlie Manuel on Juan Gonzalez

Indians fans knew Gonzalez held great potential at the plate. Like Manager Charlie Manuel, many fans have been pleasantly surprised by Juan's defensive and base-running skills.

tion at the age of 16. After three complete Minor League campaigns and two more Minor League seasons in which he got a taste of big league experience with 150 at-bats in 49 games, Gonzalez arrived in the Majors to stay in 1991 – at the age of 21.

"I've been friends with Juan since before he signed with Texas," says Alomar. "We knew he was going to be a great player. He was tall and we knew he would fill out. And he's always been able to hit and always had great power."

"I was aware of him because he was going to be the next 'phenom' to come from Puerto Rico. And he hasn't disappointed anybody, has he?"

Gonzalez's rookie season with the Rangers began with arthroscopic surgery on his right knee. Yet despite the injury and the usual rookie pressures, he still recovered to lead Texas in homers while finishing second on the team in RBI during that 1991 campaign.

The following year, Gonzalez became a full-fledged star. In 1992, in just his second full big-league season, he won the Major League home run title, edging out McGwire with a blast in the season's final game. Gonzalez also ranked among the AL's top seven in RBI, slugging percentage, total bases, and extra-base hits.

Since then, Gonzalez has reigned as one of baseball's premier power-hitters, leading the league in homers again in 1993 and in RBI in 1998. But the measure of what Gonzalez has achieved in his first decade as a Major Leaguer – and please remember, he's still just 31 years old – is best seen against some of baseball's legendary longball launchers.

He has hit 40 or more homers in at least five different seasons, one of a dozen to do so. Of the nine players ranking above Gonzalez on the list, only Ken Griffey, Jr. and McGwire aren't members of Baseball's Hall of Fame – and it's likely they'll get there upon retirement. The others, Babe Ruth, Henry Aaron, Harmon Killebrew, Willie Mays, and Ernie Banks – to name a handful – are among the game's greatest power-hitters.

Only five players hit 300 career homers faster than Gonzalez – Jimmie Foxx, Mel Ott, Ed Matthews, Mickey Mantle, and Griffey, Jr. Only six had more RBI in their first 1000 Major League games – Hank Greenberg, Joe DiMaggio, Al Simmons, Lou Gehrig, and Ted Williams – all Hall-of-Fame hitters. When John Hart says Gonzalez has



Photo: Gregory Drezdon

Hall-of-Fame credentials, he's not just waxing poetic about Cleveland's newest acquisition. It's true.

"I can't tell you exactly what our record would have been in April without him," said Manager Charlie Manuel. "But I know for sure it wouldn't have been anywhere near as good as it was.

"He's got real strong hands and he comes through the ball real well. He led us in hitting and most of the power numbers in the first month of the season. Record-wise, he's been real important to us."

Much has been made of Gonzalez's "off" year in Detroit in 2000; in Gonzalez's case, 22 homers and 67 RBI represented his lowest homer total since the strike-shortened 1994 season and lowest RBI total in his career.

Traded by the Rangers, the only organization he had ever played for, to the Tigers prior to the 2000 season, Gonzalez was plagued by a herniated disk in his back and an inflamed left ankle, limiting him to 115 games. It was not a pleasant experience physically.

Or emotionally, for that matter. The Tigers opened their magnificent new Comerica Park in time for Gonzalez's arrival and its dimensions – 398 feet in the right centerfield power alley, for example – made life rough for an injured power-hitter adjusting to being traded. "Detroit City" was as tough on Juan Gonzalez as it was on Bobby Bare in the old country tune of the same name. He was booed constantly.

"I was bad," Gonzalez says. "I played bad. The way I played, I would have booed myself, too."

A free agent after the 2000 season, Gonzalez refused Detroit's contract offer and tested the market. By January, 2001, Cleveland had proved to be the most attractive suitor for his services.

"Juan's decision to sign with the Indians was quite simple," said his agent, Scott Boras. "He probably could have gotten three times the guaranteed salary somewhere else. But he wanted to play for a winner.

"He told me as early as last August and said he wanted to get back to an environment where he could play with a winner and go to an environment where he felt he had a future."

Gonzalez's future with the Indians is just that – the future. Hart has been known to look daggers at anyone who suggests Gonzalez will be wearing an Indians uniform for just this season, and Gonzalez is

not interested in any speculation involving his future. He just wants to play.

And play he has. While his offensive output in the early portion of 2001 has been outstanding, if not surprising given his resume. His all-around game has been a most pleasant surprise – at least for those who are not familiar with Gonzalez on a day-to-day basis.

"I'm not surprised by his all-around game," says Alomar. "He's a complete player. Anybody who knows 'Igor' knows he can do just about everything on a baseball field."

For those unfamiliar with Gonzalez's all-around ability, April 28 wasn't that long ago. The memory should still be somewhat fresh. The Indians, with Dave Burba on the mound,

found themselves in a bases-loaded, nobody out jam against – of all teams – Texas, the club some say hurt Gonzalez deeply by trading him to the Tigers.

Rafael Palmeiro singled to right, scoring one run. Randy Velarde flew around third, trying for Texas' second run, when Gonzalez picked up the ball.

As Velarde approached the plate, Gonzalez launched a rocket throw toward catcher Einar Diaz. The ball arrived at the plate an instant before Velarde, Diaz made the tag – and the Tribe had one out. But the Indians were still in trouble.

Not for long, however. The next Rangers hitter blooped a shallow fly to right and Gonzalez, playing deep, sprinted in to make



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

a belt-high catch. Still on the run, Gonzalez fired a strike to first base to double Palmeiro off for an inning-ending double play. In the space of two hitters, the Rangers were out of a potentially big inning. Gonzalez had two assists and a putout, and the Indians would go on to win. Not just a hitter, this Juan Gonzalez.

“He can hit for average, hit for power, run, throw, and play defense. That’s about all anybody asks a ballplayer to do, isn’t it? How much better can he be?”

Indians Manager Charlie Manuel on Juan Gonzalez

“I’ve been very surprised since Spring Training about Juan’s all-around game,” says Manuel. “I’ve been very surprised about how well he plays the outfield, and I also am surprised at how well he plays the hitters. He reads the hitters very well.

“He gets a real good jump on the ball and he’s got a good arm and, not only that, he runs the bases very well. He’s got good instincts for the game.”

The public’s instincts for Gonzalez, however, may not be as good as Gonzalez’s instincts for the game he plays so hard and loves so much. Describing himself as “shy” and described by others as quiet by nature and deeply religious, Gonzalez has occasionally been misread by those who don’t know him, or prejudged because of what has been written. Truth is, a number of failed marriages seem to jaundice the eye of the public toward Gonzalez.

“He is a good guy,” says Alomar, who has known Gonzalez since adolescence. “He’s had his problems. But everybody, whether they’re a player or not, has problems, too. Marriage has nothing to do with baseball. It’s personal.

“It’s just that sometimes a guy’s problems get made into a big thing because he’s a star. Sometimes, a guy like Juan just needs

to be left alone so the people don’t get a wrong idea of who he really is.”

Luis Mayoral has worked in various capacities in organized baseball for decades. He has known Gonzalez for years – since Gonzalez was 14.

“Juan is not a prima donna,” Mayoral says. “So much happened so fast for him. He was in the big leagues at 19. He had to grow up in the eye of the public. It’s not easy. Others have experienced worse than Juan, much worse. Whatever his difficulty, he has always been responsible, [regarding] alimony and [other matters].

“The fact that he’s a Major League ballplayer doesn’t mean he’s perfect.”

Except as a Major League ballplayer, he may very well be the perfect power man.

“I think Juan has more raw power than anybody in baseball, including Sammy Sosa

and Mark McGwire,” says Tigers manager Phil Garner. “Has he hit as many home runs as those two? No. But purely in how far he can hit a ball – one swing – he has more raw power than either.”

“He can hit for average, hit for power, run, throw, and play defense,” says Manuel. “That’s about all anybody asks a ballplayer to do, isn’t it? How much better can he be?”

Gonzalez doesn’t answer that question. After all, it has to do with the future and Cleveland’s rightfielder is doing his best to stay firmly rooted in the present.

“I’m a shy guy,” he says. “I do the best I can for my team, my fans, and myself. That’s all.”

That’s plenty, Igor. Just keep doing what you’ve been doing today and, hopefully, for the rest of the season.

The future will get here soon enough.



Photo: Gregory Drezdson





Photo: Gregory Drezdson



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

And that's not counting Jaret Wright, whose comeback from shoulder surgery will play out in 2001 – with hopes that he can return to the form that made him one of baseball's most exciting, young prospects in 1997 and 1998.

"We look at a lot of factors in evaluating our prospects," says Huntington. "There's the frame, the body. Is the young man durable? Does he have good 'stuff'?"

"JUST A DRIVE TO BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE EVERY TIME YOU STEP ON THE MOUND. THAT'S WHAT WE TRY TO GAUGE WHEN WE DRAFT A PITCHER."

INDIANS ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, MARK SHAPIRO

Does the ball move in the hitting area? What about his delivery? His arm action? And what about his maturity? His intelligence? His composure? Those are the things we call his *makeup*."

"*Makeup* is intelligence, awareness, the ability to make adjustments," says Shapiro.

"Pride in your performance, every single night, regardless of the surroundings, what you might have on the mound that given night, the weather, the umpiring. Just a drive to be the best you can be every time you step on the mound. That's what we try to gauge when we draft a pitcher."

Up with the parent club in both 1999 and 2000, DePaula will be out for the 2001 season, "Yet if we ever get him back healthy, he might be able to become a closer in the future," Huntington says. Two additional young hurlers, Roy Smith (called up on May 23) and Jamie Brown, look to have bright futures. "In terms of having 'stuff' as good as those others, Smith and Brown are right

there with them," according to Huntington. "Jamie Brown has suffered from injuries and that has hurt his consistency."

Perhaps Baez is the best known of the Tribe's pitching prospects, given the bidding war for his talents that preceded his signing. After his defection from Cuba in 1999, Baez struggled somewhat in 2000 with Kinston in Class A and Akron in Class AA, compiling a 6-and-11 overall record with a 4.02 ERA. But in Spring Training, 2001, Baez began to show the ability the organization felt he had, continuing into the regular season at Buffalo in Class AAA and upon his call-up to the Indians in May.

"He was unbelievable in the early going this year at Buffalo," says Huntington. "Danys started to get his arm strength and velocity back in the fall of 2000. This spring, we had considerable discussion about what Danys' role might be; in what role would he help us the most and the quickest. Bullpen was the conclusion."

Already clocking between 92 MPH and 97 MPH on his fastball, the Indians Minor

League brass gave Baez the chance to throw another pitch that seems to have made the difference in his performance.

"We gave him the split finger," Huntington says. "It's become a great pitch for him. He throws it hard – like Paul Shuey. He had been using it in his days in Cuba, but early in his days with us, we tried to get him set in a more 'fastball-curve-five days between starts' mode. But once his velocity and arm strength started coming back, we added the split.

"Now, we look at Danys as a first round pick – only an advanced first round pick."

In some ways, it may have been a surprise that the Indians were able to acquire Baez by winning the bidding war for his services. In another way, it's a surprise that the Tribe was able to draft Ryan Drese, another of the prospects slated for Jacobs Field in the not-too-distant future.

"In Ryan's junior year in college, at Cal, he was THE guy," Huntington says. "Every

Playing a lead role in the evaluation and development of the Tribe's young pitchers are (l to r) Neal Huntington, Director of Player Development; Mark Shapiro, Assistant General Manager; and Mike Brown, Assistant Director of Player Development/Pitching Coordinator. Pictured, facing page, Danyis Baez. Pictured below (l to r) Jake Westbrook and Zach Day.

team in baseball agreed he was a top-five pick." But Drese's stock dropped because of a torn ACL. "When he pitched, which wasn't often, he didn't pitch well," Huntington says. "But we figured he was too good to pass up, and we were lucky to be able to draft Ryan with the fifth pick in 1998.

"He has a chance to become an interesting big league pitcher," Huntington adds. "His fastball is up to 95 MPH and he's got a lot of poise and presence on the mound. He beat Cuba in international play and his makeup is such that he's an intelligent pitcher, too. He analyzes hitters' swings, likes, and dislikes."

Like Drese, David Riske has been through adversity caused by injury. If starting his professional career as a 56th

round draft pick wasn't enough to make Riske a Major League longshot, two major operations in the 2000 season might have caused a lesser man to crumble.

Diagnosed with a bulging disc in his lower back last spring, Riske had surgery in May and spent the summer rehabbing. Then, after getting clearance to pitch, Riske

began experiencing pain in his throwing shoulder, pain that would result in surgery for a torn labrum that sidelined him until this spring.

"Obviously, what David has gone through with his surgeries has helped him mature far beyond his years," says Huntington. "He's got a real presence on the mound, he radiates a maturity.

"As for his pitching, the key to David Riske is deception. His fastball will get as high as 93 or 94 MPH and he averages out to about 90 or 91 MPH, and that's OK at the Major League level.

"But it's his delivery that makes him tough. It looks to a hitter like the ball is coming out of David's shirt sleeve because of his arm angle and the way he throws. His ball has a lot of life in the hitting area, it just seems to take off when it gets to the hitter. He can work both sides of the plate down and he can come up with a purpose if he wants to."

While Riske, DePaula, Drese, Wright, Drew, Sabathia, Brown, Smith, and Baez have been Indians for their entire professional careers, two more of the Tribe's hot pitching prospects were acquired by Cleveland as a result of the Yankees using the same philosophy toward their prospects as the Indians have: Sometimes you have



All photos: Gregory Drezdron

to give up good prospects to get a missing piece you think you need for a title.

Last year, New York needed a left-handed hitter who could play outfield, DH, and provide a veteran presence. The Indians were looking to move David Justice, a well-paid veteran who could fill each of the Yankees needs. Justice was traded to the Yankees in July in exchange for Ricky Ledee and two players to be named later. Those two players turned out to be young pitchers; 23-year-old Jake Westbrook and 22-year-old Zach Day.

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Both righthanders, Westbrook and Day have other similarities, according to Huntington. "They're both big, well-built, and we like their makeup," he says.

"Three things jump to mind when I think about Jake," Huntington adds. "He's got a compact delivery, the kind of delivery that's easy to repeat, to make consistent, and that's a good thing. Second, he's got outstanding character, outstanding makeup and third, he's got good stuff, a lot of life to his pitches. Zach Day is a lot the same."

So with all this talent, one must wonder how the Indians know when it's time to advance a young pitcher through the ranks. Casual fans will look at the pitching statistics from Buffalo, or Akron, and wonder why some pitchers are promoted and others, who may have relatively better stats, are left behind.

"We have strict criteria, level to level, that determine when we should move pitchers, what they need to accomplish before they move," Shapiro says. "They need to exhibit a solid delivery that allows them to locate a four-seam fastball in all areas of the strike zone. Then they need to develop their secondary pitches, need to learn to attack hitters. And the final thing is to identify hitters' swings and pitch to their weaknesses."

Pitching strength isn't new for the Indians. The last time the Tribe was considered one of baseball's best organizations, after WW II, the Indians were thought to have the best arms in baseball. The "Big Four," Bob Lemon, Early Wynn, Mike Garcia, and Bob Feller, are four of the top 10 winners in franchise history – all pitched on the same staff between 1949 and 1956. Lefty Don Mossi and righty Ray Narleski, considered the prototype bullpen combination, provided relief for the three future Hall of Famers (Garcia hasn't made the Hall of Fame) for much of the era. Roughly 20 years later, in the late '60s, the Indians staff of Sam McDowell, Luis Tiant, Sonny Siebert, and Steve Hargan was also regarded as one of baseball's best. In between, pitchers like Gary Bell, Jim Perry, and Mudcat Grant were solid performers.

And now, on the brink of another era of pitching wealth, the Indians have almost a dozen good, young prospects from which to choose. If only half prove to be productive Major Leaguers, the Indians will be "well-armed" for many seasons to come.

LEN BARKER'S PERFECT GAME – FACTS & FIGURES

Date: May 15, 1981 Temperature: 49 degrees
Attendance: 7,290 Time: 2:09

- The 6-4, 215-pound righthander nicknamed "Large Lenny" was seeking only his third victory and attempting to keep the Indians in first place against Toronto.
- It was the first perfect game at Cleveland Stadium, the second by an Indians pitcher, only the eighth in modern baseball history (since 1901), and the 10th of all-time (since 1880).
- Though he had no strikeouts through the first three innings, the 25-year-old Barker fanned 11 from the fourth through the ninth.
- Only two Blue Jays connected squarely with the ball.
- Damaso Garcia lashed a line drive into the left center-field alley that Rick Manning caught to end the second inning.
- Rick Bosetti led off the sixth with a sizzling one-hopper to Duane Kuiper, who backhanded the ball behind second base and threw to Mike Hargrove for the out.
- The only other difficult defensive plays were made by third baseman Toby Harrah in the fifth inning and by Duane Kuiper in the seventh.
- Willie Upshaw hit a twisting pop foul near the third base dugout that Harrah dived into the stands to catch.
- A slow bouncer by Alfredo Griffin was fielded by Kuiper, whose throw to first was barely in time.
- All 11 of Barker's strikeouts were swinging.
- Cleveland's first two runs came in the first inning. Centerfielder Rick Manning opened with a single. Manning went to third when Toronto first baseman John Mayberry committed an error on Mike Hargrove's one-out grounder. Manning went on to score on Andre Thornton's sacrifice fly, then Hargrove came home on a single by catcher Ron Hassey.
- Rightfielder Jorge Orta solo homered in the eighth.
- Barker threw 103 pitches
- 74 of them in the strike zone
- 41 fastballs • 60 curves • 2 change-ups



Gregory Dreitzon

Pictured right: Len Barker threw out the ceremonial first pitch, Sunday, May 13, 2001, commemorating the 20th anniversary of his perfect game.

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Photo: Gregory Drezdzen

Slippin' n Slidin' Around Town Year-Round



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

*They're New! You Won't Want To Miss Them.
And They Benefit Cleveland Indians Charities!*

ONLINE AUCTIONS

Memorabilia collectors have a new online destination — www.indians.com

*Cleveland Indians Charities
will make four autographed items
available per week for online auction via
the Tribe's website, www.indians.com*

Weekly auctions begin each Monday at 3PM and run until noon the following Monday. The highest bidders at the conclusion of each weekly auction will be contacted via e-mail by the Indians for payment arrangements.

Payments can be made by MasterCard, the preferred credit card of the Cleveland Indians, or by VISA, Discover, American Express or by check made payable to Cleveland Indians Charities. The items will be mailed upon receipt of payment.

The highest bidders will have 48 hours to respond to the e-mail notification of their bid selection before the next highest bidder will be awarded the item. Minimum bids for each item will range from \$20 - \$100. All items will include a letter of authenticity.

All proceeds benefit Cleveland Indians Charities which supports youth education and recreation programs in the Greater Cleveland area.

Auction items will vary each week, but may include banners, autographed jerseys, bats, helmets, and photographs.

Photo: Gregory Drezdon

